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U.S. Army: Unit Records,
Fifth Engineer Special Brigade, 1943-1945

1,200 pages (approximate)
Boxes 553-554

The Fifth Engineer Special Brigade (ESB) was reorganized in England in late 1943. It received attachments of quartermaster and service battalions, a Military Police Company, and various specialized units. From November 1943 to June 1944, these subordinate units spent their time training in the United Kingdom. The 37th and 348th Engineer Combat Battalions, along with some support units, landed on Omaha Beach as part of the First U.S. Army on June 6, 1944. The remainder of the brigade landed from June 6 to June 9. Most of these units, after the initial assault, spent the next few months on reconnaissance and clearing minefields or performing rear area support functions such as processing prisoners, marshalling supplies, and directing the large amount of military traffic.

The records of the 5th ESB cover the period from January 10, 1943 to August 31, 1945, with the most documentation occurring between February and July of 1944. Because it was an Engineer unit the 5th ESB was frequently broken up, with its subordinate battalions and companies being detached to infantry units during and after the Normandy landings. The records are therefore made up mostly of these detached units, so they will not appear as part of a consistent brigade history. The units with the greatest amount of documentation tend to be the rear area supply and quartermaster battalions. However, there are numerous after-action and reconnaissance reports for the D-Day landings and the follow-up activities of the various battalions, including maps and diagrams of enemy equipment.

The material has been arranged into six subseries according to the classification scheme of the Departmental Records Branch. The General Historical and Operational Reports are more of a general history of subordinate units. They are appendices to a larger Brigade history which is not present. There are five appendices for four quartermaster units and one Military Police Company. The history for the 533rd Quartermaster Battalion is quite detailed up until the Normandy operation, at which point the reports become brief. There are two folders containing the brigade plan for Overlord. These include troop, loading, and ordnance lists, orders of battle, tonnage expected on the beach and the assault plan for the Engineer Combat Battalions. S-1 reports contain a list of units and six digit grid coordinates for their locations, unit strengths, casualties, estimated time of arrival of replacements, prisoner counts, graves registration, and troop morale.

The S-2 folders contain daily periodic reports on intelligence activities and military operations. These cover units in contact, enemy activity, prisoner counts, assessment of liberated towns, burial coordinates for enemy dead, hand-drawn maps of the disposition of friendly and enemy units, and reconnaissance reports. There are captured German documents on V-1 rockets, paratrooper duties, and a German soldier's diary from June 6 to July 17, 1944. There are also memoranda dealing extensively with enemy mine capabilities and functional drawings of German mines intended for dissemination to engineers in the field. Incoming Division level G-2 reports show the front lines, friendly and enemy order of battle, prisoner counts, and a counter-intelligence memorandum on enemy agents captured. The S-3 folders list the distribution of the Brigade among the combat assault groups for Omaha beach and their duties during and after the landing. There are also after-action reports for 28 units that were filed with the 5th ESB. They cover the voyage across the Channel, the assault, and consolidation activities thereafter. There is a break after July and then reports from December 17-22, 1944. The supply reports in the S-4 folders are largely made up of plans for landing and setting up on the beach. Although there is no combat action on the part of the supply units, there is information on logistical expectations with a large and detailed hand-drawn map of Omaha beach, including the landing areas, marshalling areas, and terrain features. The reports are for April 2, 1944 only.

The Staff Section is made up of daily periodic reports and special reports for the 37th and 348th Engineer Combat Battalions. These cover the capture of enemy equipment such as flares, gun emplacements, tripwires, and flame-throwers, with hand-drawn overlays. There are also reconnaissance reports on the location of minefields, again with maps and overlays. There are about 70 Public Relations stories from September 13, 1944 to April 17, 1945. Some have details on unit action. They were intended for hometown newspapers, and the information sheet soldiers filled out for these stories is included. The records for the 5th Engineer Special Brigade are concentrated in a few months during 1944, centering on the Normandy invasion. There is no substantial information after August 1944.

CHRONOLOGY

5th Engineer Special Brigade

November 13, 1943	The Brigade began receiving attachments in South Wales as part of a general reorganization in preparation for the Normandy invasion.
November-June, 1944	The Brigade spends its time training in England and on various railhead and construction duties.
June 6, 1944	The first detachments from the Brigade land with the assault waves on Omaha beach.
June 6-9, 1944	The entire Brigade is landed in follow-up waves.
June-August, 1944	The Engineer Combat Battalions spend most of their time on reconnaissance and clearing minefields.
June 6, 1945	The Brigade holds a Memorial ceremony at Omaha beach in honor of the D-Day landings. Most of the Brigade is spread throughout Europe on occupation duty.

DESCRIPTION OF SUBSERIES

<u>Box Nos.</u>	<u>Subseries</u>
553	<p>I. GENERAL HISTORICAL AND OPERATIONAL REPORTS. 1943-1944. 6 folders.</p> <p>A general history of units attached to the Brigade, operational plans for Overlord, and letters to officers concerning a D-Day Memorial ceremony. Arranged according to the DRB classification scheme and chronologically thereunder.</p>
553	<p>II. S-1 REPORTS. 1944. 4 folders.</p> <p>S-1 Personnel reports on unit strength, composition and location. Arranged according to the DRB classification scheme and chronologically thereunder.</p>
554	<p>III. S-2 REPORTS. 1944. 3 folders.</p> <p>Periodic reports concerning enemy activities and order of battle, intelligence and counter-intelligence. Incoming G-2 reports. Arranged according to the DRB classification scheme and reverse chronological order.</p>
554	<p>IV. S-3 REPORTS. 1944. 3 folders.</p> <p>Operational and assault plans for the Normandy invasion, after-action reports at battalion and company level. Arranged according to the DRB classification scheme and reverse chronological order.</p>
554	<p>V. S-4 REPORTS. 1944. 1 folder.</p> <p>Planning for Normandy landings and expected supply situation, planned layout and organization of beach after assault. Reports are dated April 2, 1944 only.</p>
554	<p>VI. STAFF SECTION REPORTS. 1944. 6 folders.</p> <p>Daily periodic reports, special reports, maps and overlays, all for the 37th and 348th Engineer Combat Battalions. Public relations stories on individual soldiers. Arranged according to the DRB classification scheme, reverse chronological order for the E.C.B.'s and chronologically for the PR stories.</p>

CONTAINER LIST

<u>Box No.</u>	<u>Contents</u>
553	<p>SUBSERIES I: GENERAL HISTORICAL AND OPERATIONAL REPORTS</p> <p>Unit history for 533rd Quartermaster Battalion; June 1943-October 1944.</p> <p>Unit history for 4141st Co., 4142nd Co., 4143rd Co., and 302nd Military Police Co.; June 1943-October 1944.</p> <p>Planning for Overlord (1) (2); January-February 1944.</p> <p>Plans for D-Day Memorial (1) (2); March-August 1945.</p> <p>SUBSERIES II: S-1 REPORTS</p> <p>S-1 Personnel Reports; March-May 1944.</p> <p>S-1 Personnel Reports; June 1944.</p> <p>S-1 Personnel Reports; July 1944.</p> <p>S-1 Personnel Reports; August-September 1944.</p>
554	<p>SUBSERIES III: S-2 REPORTS</p> <p>S-2 Periodic Reports; June 1944.</p> <p>S-2 Periodic Reports; July-August 1944.</p> <p>S-2 Incoming G-2 Reports; June-August 1944.</p> <p>SUBSERIES IV: S-3 REPORTS</p> <p>S-3 After Action Reports (1) (2); June-July, December, 1944.</p> <p>S-3 Planning for Overlord; March 1944.</p> <p>SUBSERIES V: S-4 REPORTS</p> <p>S-4 Supply Plans for Overlord; April 1944.</p>

SUBSERIES VI: STAFF SECTION REPORTS

37th Engineer Combat Battalion Periodic Reports; June-July 1944.

37th Engineer Combat Battalion Special Reports; June-October 1944.

37th Engineer Combat Battalion Recon Reports; June-July 1944.

348th Engineer Combat Battalion Periodic Reports; June-July 1944.

Public Relations Stories (1) (2); September 1944 - April 1945.